

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5
B 17
1. A method for detecting the presence or absence of a prokaryotic microorganism in a sample, the method comprising the steps of:
- identifying a protease that is unique to the prokaryotic microorganism;
 - providing a quenched labeled substrate specific for said protease; and
 - providing the sample; and
 - determining the presence or absence of a detectable label.
- 10
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the quenched label is selected from the group consisting of fluorescent labeled peptide and colorimetric labeled peptide.
- 15
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the means for determining is a colorimeter or fluorimeter.
4. A method for detecting a plurality of pathogenic microorganisms in a sample, the method comprising the steps of:
- identifying a protease that is unique to the prokaryotic microorganism;
 - providing a quenched labeled broad spectrum substrate for said protease;
 - providing the sample; and
 - determining the presence or absence of a detectable label.
- 20
- 25
5. ✓ A method of using broad spectrum fluorescent or colorimetric labeled peptides to recognize a bacterial species by detecting the conjugated peptide with a colorimeter or fluorimeter.

- ✓ 6. A device for capturing and releasing bacteria from solid or liquid extracts comprising protein encapsulated starch or Styrofoam.
- ✓ 7. A device for capturing and releasing bacteria from a sample, said device comprising a pellet and a layer of antibodies entrapped in gelatin surrounding said pellet.
- ✓ 8. A sensor for detection of bacteria in a sample, said device comprising packaging material having a first side proximal to said sample and having a second side; and a dye labeled substrate for the bacteria wherein said dye labeled substrate is attached to said first side .
- ✓ 9. A method for using an alpha-crystallin type protein comprising the steps of:
(a) expressing and purifying the recombinant alpha-crystallin type protein;
and
(b) adding the alpha-crystallin type protein to a solid phase or a liquid phase assay containing a dye labeled peptide in an amount sufficient to reduce proteolysis of said dye labeled peptide.